

STATE PROCUREMENT OFFICE
Procurement of Health and Human Services
Chapter 103F, HRS

FAQ
(Frequently Asked Questions)
about
The Request for Information (RFI)

	<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1	What is an RFI?	An RFI (Request for Information) is a tool used to gather, share and clarify information when state agencies conduct planning activities for health and human services.
2	Is a public notice for an RFI required?	Yes. Notice of the RFI shall be placed on the Procurement Notices System (PNS) website. It is not required to place a notice in the newspaper. <i>Reference section 3-142-202 (a), HAR</i>
3	Can a purchasing agency place notice of an RFI in the newspaper?	Purchasing agencies have the option of placing a notice of the RFI in the newspaper in addition to posting the notice on the PNS website. When doing so, the price list for placing public and procurement notices in the newspaper shall be followed. Please refer to the pricelist for public and procurement notices.
4	What can be addressed in an RFI?	An RFI can address any subject relevant to a state agencies planning activities such as, the goals and objectives, target population or clients to be served, services that are necessary to reach the goal, service specifications, feasibility issues, or cost factors. <i>Reference section 3-142-202 (b)</i>
5	Does an RFI require a meeting?	No. An RFI can be conducted via fax, e-mail or mail or any other method you choose. It can even be done via your website. Notice of the RFI must be posted on the Procurement Notices (PNS) website. See question No. 2.
6	Who may be invited to respond to the RFI? Does every provider have to be invited to respond?	Because an RFI shall be posted on the Procurement Notices (PNS) website, you will hopefully have a reasonable exposure to interested parties. In addition, an RFI may be sent to any knowledgeable person or entity that the purchasing agency deems advisable. Keep in mind the principle of open government. A purchasing agency would not want to invite only one or two providers if there are other providers or stakeholders interested in the target group or service. Remember also that an RFI is not just for provider input but also for input from consumers/clients/users, community groups and other interested parties. <i>Reference sections 3-141-407, 3-142-202(a), 3-142-202(c), and 3-142-202(d), HAR</i>

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7	If a provider participates in an RFI are they then excluded from responding to the solicitation?	No. Collaboration with private providers is encouraged in state planning activities to facilitate efficiency, responsiveness and organization in meeting the health and human service needs of Hawaii's people. Uncompensated provider participation is encouraged. Keep in mind that collaboration does not constitute an exemption from anti-competitive practices. See question No. 5. <i>Reference section 3-142-203, HAR</i>
8	What are some ways to ensure that interested parties are aware of the RFI?	As a state agency with a history of serving a particular population or addressing a particular problem you probably have access to most of the interested parties. Some sources for reaching interested parties are: advisory groups, task forces that address the client population or the issue being addressed, professional organizations or professional publications. Private providers and other interested parties may also call state purchasing agencies for the services in which they are interested and let them know they are interested in participating in future RFI's. Remember, placing a notice of the RFI on the PNS website is required.
9	What must be in an RFI?	There are 6 elements that must be in an RFI. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name of the agency issuing the request. 2. A description of the information being sought. The more specific the questions, the more likely respondents will address the areas about which you have concerns. 3. The procedure for responding. (Place and location of a meeting, address to send comments, etc.) 4. A statement that participation is optional, and is not required to respond to any subsequent procurement. 5. A statement that neither the purchasing agency nor the interested party has any obligation under the request for information. 6. If applicable, other means by which the request for information is being solicited, such as an oral presentation, meeting, telephone survey, electronic media, or any combination of these methods. (See question No. 12 when issuing an RFI pursuant to the special procedures in section 3-143-614, HAR) <i>Reference section 3-142-202 (c), HAR</i>

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10	How often should we conduct an RFI?	<p>An RFI shall be conducted each time an RFP is prepared. Depending on the complexity of the service or the issue being addressed, it may be advisable to conduct more than one RFI for an RFP. For instance, one RFI might be conducted early in the process to obtain feedback on a configuration of services a state agency is considering. After obtaining feedback and analyzing it, a second RFI containing a draft of service specifications may be issued to obtain additional feedback.</p> <p><i>Reference sections 3-142-202, and 3-142-302, HAR</i></p>
11	Is an RFI limited to the competitive (RFP) method of procurement?	<p>No. An RFI can be used with other methods of procurement as well. For instance, if a state agency is contemplating a restrictive purchase of service, issuing an RFI may help to discover whether other providers are interested in providing the service. Note that conducting an RFI without additional efforts/justification is not sufficient for a restrictive purchase of service.</p>
12	I heard we could issue an RFI whenever federal funds are involved and not have to conduct an RFP afterwards. Is that true?	<p>No. It is NOT true. Federal funding does not constitute not an exemption from procurement. However, there are times when special procedures may be used. This occurs when a purchasing agency wishes to apply for federal funding that is competitive and there is a requirement/preference that providers be named in the grant application. There is not enough time to issue an RFP from the point at which the grant is announced until proposals/applications are due so special procedures are authorized in section 3-143-614, HAR. A purchasing agency may conduct an RFI in those circumstances. The RFI must include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The name of the state agency issuing the request; 2. A statement that the request is being issued for the purpose of including a provider or providers in a federal grant application which may result in a contract with the provider(s) if the state is awarded; 3. A description of the service or services being sought; 4. The criteria by which applicants will be evaluated for selection; 5. The deadline by which responses to the request for information shall be submitted and the method; and 6. Any other requirements that the purchasing agency deems relevant to the request. <p><i>Reference: sections 3-142-202(f) and 3-143-614, HAR</i></p>
13	How far in advance of issuing an RFP should we conduct an RFI?	<p>The RFI is for the purpose of obtaining community input whenever an RFP is developed. Depending on the information you are seeking, when the RFP is held may vary (see question 10). Generally, we have found that RFIs held between 2 and 9 months prior to the notice for an RFP tend to be the most useful.</p>

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14	Do I need to have a contact person listed on the notice of the RFI?	Yes. List the name of the contact person, and contact information (at least phone number, e-mail address, etc.). In order to get quality feedback, respondents will probably need clarification and will have questions.
15	I have a document with additional/more specific information that is needed in order to respond to the RFI. How do I make it available?	There are a number of ways you can get additional information to interested parties. You can do any combination of the following. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include a name and phone number or e-mail address where they can request the document and you can e-mail it or mail it. • Post it on your office or department website and indicate the website address in the notice. • Post it on the PNS (Procurement Notices System) website. It must be in PDF and should be uploaded where it indicates you may optionally upload the IFB/RFP. See the procurement notices system manual.
16	Do RFIs have to have a number? Can I use the same number as my RFP?	Having an RFI number makes it much easier to refer to and find on the PNS. You may have more than one RFI and at times there can be many RFIs on the procurement notices website. You can use the same number as the RFP, but change it a little or make it clearly identifiable that it is an RFI and not an RFP. One way is to include “RFI” in the number.
17	When posting on the PNS should I indicate that this is an RFI?	Yes! Enter “Request for Information” as the first thing in the description box. If you are attaching a document with additional information, ensure it indicates that it is an RFI at the beginning of the document.
18	What do I do with the attestation form? Do I need to keep it?	Yes. Place it in your procurement file. Also, print a copy of the notice from the web on the first day it appears, in the same way as you would for a solicitation notice. Keep it in the procurement file. This is part of the documentation.
19	I have already posted my notice and a document with additional information. How do I post the agenda for the RFI meeting on the PNS?	The PNS only allows one document in addition to the notice. Add the agenda to the optional document with the additional information. You can note that the agenda has been added in the description. Combine the two documents on your computer and upload the combined document.

If you have questions, contact Mara Smith at 587-4704 or mara.smith@hawaii.gov or Corinne Higa at 587-4706 or corinne.y.higa@hawaii.gov.